

Jonah, the Angry, Self-Pitying Prophet

Jonah 4:1-11

Jonah is not the enigma that he appears, because many of God's servants have anger and self-pity in their hearts and spirits when they ought not. Jonah was displeased with the will and the work of God toward the inhabitants of Nineveh. No doubt this resembles in type the jealousy of the Jews when the gospel went unto the Gentiles, and the Gentiles received it, while the Jews blasphemed and cast it from themselves. The message of the one who was dead for three days and nights in the earth, and rose again, like as Jonah was three days and nights in the whale's belly, and came out again, was preached unto the Gentiles, and to them was granted repentance unto life, while the Jews considered themselves unworthy of eternal life.

Vs. 1-3 – Jonah was greatly vexed and grieved that the Ninevites were spared. Whether or not he feared what the Assyrian empire would do to his own nation, the Jews, who continued to live in idolatry and rebellion against God; or whether for some other reason, he was greatly displeased and filled with anger. Strange, is it not, that he should be angry at the lovingkindness and the goodness of God, in leading the Ninevites to and granting them repentance, not to mention the success of his own preaching? Jonah protests that he knew God to be gracious, longsuffering, and merciful, and that he anticipated that God would turn from bringing to pass the threatened overthrow of Nineveh. Why should this heathen city be spared, while at home Israel was cut short?

Often we are jealous for fleshly reasons rather than spiritual reasons. We desire favor for our favorites, but take no thought as to the honor and the glory of God in saving and hardening whom He will, and in calling sinners to repentance. Jonah, so far from pitying, or having mercy in his heart toward Nineveh, feels pity and anguish of spirit for himself, and requests that he might die. A foolish, self-pitying prayer! He is not the only servant of God to ever pray such a prayer. **Num. 11:4-15 I Kings 19:1-4**

Vs. 4 – God issues a mild rebuke to His disgruntled prophet. The question is essentially, “Are you right, Jonah, or am I?”

Vs. 5-11 – The strange lesson of the gourd is here given by God, not only to Jonah, but to all subsequent generations by way of the Holy Spirit inspired and providentially preserved record of the scriptures. *“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope,”* (Rom. 15:4). *“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come,”* (I Cor. 10:11).

The gourd grew up quickly, overnight, and provided shade to Jonah, making him glad for the comfort it’s shade provided. Just as quickly, the gourd perished, being smitten by a worm. Then, God sent a hot, dry wind, which, combined with the blazing sun, made Jonah miserable and faint. Jonah again despaired in sorrow and anger, and returned to his self-pitying gloom. *“If, dear friends, like Jonah, you want to complain, you will soon have something to complain about. People who are resolved to fret, generally make for themselves reasons for fretfulness.”* (Spurgeon, C. H.)

God revealed that Jonah had more pity for the gourd than he did for the souls in Nineveh. The gourd was a fleeting temporal blessing for which Jonah neither labored nor caused it to grow. In contrast, the people in Nineveh were God’s creation, the work of His hands. *“Behold, all souls are mine,”* (Ezek. 18:4). *“The earth is the LORD’s and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein,”* (Ps. 24:1). *“Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh,”* (Jer. 32:27). **Acts 17:24-28** Jonah, if he could, would have spared the gourd merely out of the selfish reason that he received relief from the heat of the sun by sitting under its shade. God’s reasons for granting repentance unto sinners are not selfish, but are based in the love, mercy, kindness, goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering of His own perfect heart. **Luke 6:27-36**

I Tim. 1:12-17 Let us ever remember: *“It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not,”* (Lam. 3:22). *“But I obtained mercy ... and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus,”* is the only true and faithful testimony any of us can give with regard to God’s dealings with us in saving us from our sins and granting us repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Too often, we pity ourselves, especially when we lose temporal benefits and conveniences. But as servants of God, we ought to pity sinners who are blind and on the verge of destruction, if they

do not repent and turn from their wickedness and the folly of their own ways to the Lord.

The book ends abruptly. God had the last word. Let God have the last word with you, beloved. Often we need to be like the prophet Job, whose response to God was, "*Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth,*" (Job 40:4). Oh, the forbearance, the longsuffering, and the mercy of God! God will have the last word.

Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites. We are a sign to those about us. If we live after the course of this world, rather than living a crucified, buried, and risen life, walking in the truth, living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, then we are a sign that our profession is vain. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.